The Long Arm of Corruption

As Russia's war against Ukraine rages on, we, in the Western world, begin to see things that were hidden in plain view

Corruption kills.

The Russian Federation had been corrupted to the core and that lead to war. War leads to questions of who is responsible. That, in turn, produces an even larger issue of ultimate accountability. It has a lot to do with propaganda dispensed by the Russian Mainstream Mass Media, yielding perhaps a not-so-strange conclusion: every Russian citizen of legal age who voted and supported Vladimir Putin is responsible.

But isn't collective responsibility too far reaching? Perhaps not. Let's look at a similar historic example: Adolf Hitler's Germany of the late 1930's. Yes, history repeats itself and if we don't learn from it, we might be doomed

When you vote, you literally select your future. This defines how you shall live for the next several years or even decades. Those elected will chart the future path for you and the entire nation. When those elected have your best interest in heart and mind it leads to good things, it's the true measure of your vote. When corruption takes hold in the land, like it did in recent American elections, the person who was elected to be our President is by all accounts very corrupt. A corrupted elected official is a person who would do the bidding of a selected group of people with special interests. The corrupted elected official becomes a puppet whose strings are pulled by others! For example: "Biden and the Marxist Democrats" – "Biden and the Chinese Communist Party." But currently, our interest now lies elsewhere. It's the Russian Federation.

In time, Russia, as a country, should become a subject of study in colleges and Universities. An important prerequisite to better understand Political Science studies. Perhaps called "Anti-Corruption In Government 101" or "The Ultimate Political Corruption of Russia Case Study". Because we all must learn and understand how allowing corruption on all levels of the government and daily life leads to a nation's demise, a failed state, national financial issues, wars and utter total misery. To date Russia is the best (and the worst at the same time) example of a nation falling into the abyss of History. We are not writing to promote Western political systems to the world. This is about very simple Common Sense. Just as washing your hands can lead to better health and personal

hygiene.

What we have in front of us is an almost perfect, modern case in point. Russia's current President Vladimir Putin is a product of a corrupt (and failed) Communist regime. Russia's previous President sort of "introduced" this ex-KGB man to the public by explicitly stating "here's you next leader". And the public obediently voted for him. The society had not questioned who was to become their next head of state and what his resume really meant to each and every one of its members.

When Putin was elected, corruption already reigned supreme, with posts being bought and sold, influences peddled and big money made by any means possible – in the aftermath of the USSR. Crime was rampant and Russian organized crime was violent and real. Yet in a way, the country was moving in the right direction. The people wanted normal lives for themselves, so they can live like we do in the Western world. However, they dealt with corruption that permeated the society on all levels with even more corruption. The Police were bought off; getting a phone line installed in your apartment required an under the table payoff. A fledgling business community had to make illegal payoffs for nearly everything. Russians solved customs duty issues by paying money under the table. Their goods would then be admitted into the country without high taxation.

The nation and its people were competing over who is going to out corrupt whom. If you wish to start a business in Russia, pass a building fire inspection, pass a road test for your drivers' license, avoid speeding ticket, pay less tax to the local revenue office, get your children into better schools, get your passport for foreign travel faster, you needed to pay off the criminally corrupted. It is the way of life in Russia. Corruption is so very deeply embedded in Russia, it's a terminal illness. In time, the corrupted police started wars with organized crime and took over the Russian protection racket, massive pay-offs from the businesses now went to police. The large amounts paid by businesses had to be recouped by raising prices. The Russian public suffered. The people ultimately paid for this corrupted twisted world. If you want to be an elected Russian official that can be arranged with the correct amount of money; it covered the cost of eliminating your completion. The undesirable political aspirants are told that running for an office could be a health hazard or dismissed under legally-looking pretenses. Once the payee is elected, this new official would quickly recover his investment by peddling influence in all affairs both public and private.

At the highest level of the Russian society, the parliament laws would be introduced to benefit single individuals on a country-wide scale. There was talk (but rarely proof) about suitcases of cash being shuttled, later to be replaced

by offshore account bank transfers. Anyone who dared to investigate corruption would be forced to leave Russian for their own safety or else be imprisoned on made-up criminal charges, shot dead, blown up or poisoned. Then there were people who just vanished to never be seen again. Being a “gangster” who solved business issues with guns while wearing cheap Chinese sneakers soon went out of vogue. The government had eventually supplanted and replaced organized criminals, who then became respected and violent businessmen preying on the Russian people.

To its honor, in the early 1990’s America’s lawyers tried to introduce into Russia some elements of our own legal system – like jury trials and application of law and cooperating on various legal matters. But it ultimately went nowhere. When an accused wealthy criminal wanted a “fair” trial, his Russian lawyer knew who would need to be paid off and how much money was needed. It was very, very expensive to be found not guilty. If you had some money, but not enough to buy a not guilty verdict, you can buy a shorter sentence. If convicted, one could even buy a private prison cell with a kitchen, fine food, liquor, cell phone access, HDTV and call girls. This is all VERY true.

The Russian youth, who embraced western culture, learned English, went to colleges and universities in the United States and Europe were eventually employed by Russian corporations and corrupted. They had taken western business management courses and learned how the entire business world functioned. But they ultimately failed when it was time to apply their talent and ability. The “old values” simply could not be replaced.

Most young people lacked “social lift” as it’s called. That is to advance to higher levels and attain higher positions within the company or government. Those “higher spots” are reserved for sons and daughters of Russia’s elite. If this is not corruption, we don’t know what is.

The list of corruption is long and goes deep into Russian society and we could go on and on. Russia’s army is slowly failing in its Ukraine war, a failure due to the ever-present Russian culture of corruption. Generals sold troop rations through the market places while solders now face starvation. Tanks’ diesel fuel is being peddled for money. Captured Russian solders look like beggars, in well-worn dirty uniforms and cheap-looking boots. Their Air Force pilots use older commercial GPS units in their cockpits because funds were not allocated (i.e. stolen) for the modern military-grade equipment. Solders in the field utilize cheap Chinese two-way radios without a hint of voice encryption (we’ve seen pictures). Where did the money go? All of this is unimaginable, but true: two bosses of Russia’s FSB intelligence services department were recently house-arrested for failure to subvert Ukraine from the inside. Their department had

been budgeted five billion (!) dollars to be distributed to agents inside Ukraine to create massive disinformation, sabotage, and espionage; to purchase political influence ahead of the war. Much of it never reached the intended recipients. Ukraine is most grateful now.

Russian elected officials openly wear watches and jewelry of known values exceeding their annual salaries countless times over. Many own affluent homes and apartments both domestically and in the United States and Europe worth millions of dollars each. They could never legally afford them. The state does not investigate or even admonish these people. Some of them possess or control businesses while in office. Their relatives own significant numbers of shares in large corporations; they regularly bid and win government contracts of immense value. There is so much more to the above picture. We could go on and on.

Corrupted individuals moved their ill-begotten funds to the Western banks where they could be safe; bought expensive European and American properties and attempted to establish themselves as respectable law abiding individuals. Yet they brought corruption to our nations. They hire the best lawyers, accountants, political influence peddlers who will do their bidding on behest of Russia in their new domiciles – bribing businesses, judiciary, public servants and spreading the poison to our societies. The West kept their eyes closed for many years, as they didn’t want to confront the inconveniently sensitive political subject of dirty money fueling our economies. But now, with the war in Ukraine that dam had burst wide open. We hope for some swift house cleaning.

Mr. Putin owes much of his powers to corrupting influences and implicit support of the country’s elite who agreed to stay out of politics in exchange for vast riches and shoring up President Putin’s policies. No matter what these elite people do, the law enforcement will not touch them. In the eyes of the Russian Federation they can do no wrong. What a country!

Anyone over there who calls for investigation of corruption is poisoned and/or jailed – like Alexey Navalny, his crime-exposing political organization disbanded, his many colleagues had to run for the exits to avoid jail time. The level of corruption is simply unbelievable. In rare cases when police raided and arrested someone important who has rubbed the wrong people the wrong way, they discovered entire apartments serving as cash storage warehouses. Large boxes and many duffel bags filled with U.S. Dollars, Euros and Rubles. In one case it was a pallet of U.S. Dollars in their original plastic U.S. Department of Treasury wrapping, fully intact brand new cash bundles. It is estimated that over a trillion dollars have been siphoned and stolen from the Russian government and people and moved out of Russia. The average Russian can hardly make ends meet. All this wealth has left Russia with no positive help for its people.

Which brings us to the subject of personal responsibility. Corruption always rests on power. Power is elected by the same people who then must live with the choices they made. When nobody speaks out; challenges corruption peacefully or forcefully, corruption takes hold of society and will not relinquish the position it attained. Like a huge poisonous snake, it will now bite anyone who attempts to challenge it. It can never be dislodged without a bloody dangerous fight. What could've once been resolved by something as simple as fair, uncorrupted voting process, will now have to be dealt through revolution. People will die, economy fails, and the state may go down. The outcome is not guaranteed.

Which is what takes place in the Russian Federation now. Corruption leads to wrong leaders who don't go away, to faulty political decisions that lead to war and which, slowly but surely, shall result in state failure and disintegration. It all started easy enough with voting places that openly permitted ballot box stuffing on behalf of the ruling party. People paid to vote multiple times in nationally organized manipulations, the government leaning on its workers to vote exactly as they are told and to bring back a photo of their filled out ballot as proof. Fraud, fraud and more fraud. Very few people ever challenged any of it. Most others stayed "out of politics", found other important matters to attend to; feigned ignorance and avoided the matter altogether out of fear. Some couldn't care less and stated so. They are now all paying the ultimate price.

Their savings are worth nothing; property values are plummeting as country's economy is about to be demolished; their country committed aggression against a neighbor. It is fully condemned by every civilized free nation on earth. Countless lives are being lost and towns destroyed. Almost three millions became refugees from Ukraine and another million people exited Russia in the three weeks of war (as of this writing). All of it is related to the corruption of Russian society; its inability to rise up and fight this cancer called corruption. The long chain of events had ultimately affected absolutely everyone over there and will surely shake things up over here. The reverberations will not stop for many years.

Society corruption often starts at the voting booth.

It commences with failure to challenge the evil-doers. With breakdown in protection of country's civil institutions. With malfunction to understand and accept freedom as your right and not something granted to you by the outside powers. With letdown to comprehend how your own freedom is ultimately your responsibility and not the governments'.

Political scientists will study these phenomena for many years to come; derive interesting conclusions; and produce warnings to the Western societies. This is by no means over. Corrupted empires don’t fail and go away without very loud bangs.

And in conclusion: it is true that our lives here in America are not free of corruption. Like a nasty mold, it finds places to live and occasionally flourish. But if society always rejects it and fights it, scrubs it and stays alert it can keep it at bay. Voting is a big part of keeping corruption in check. Failure to do so may ultimately result in “the failed nation”. America simply cannot follow the “Russian path”.

Stay safe out there